

C152-ST Wine trails in Champagne



Champagne ! Behind these billions of fine bubbles, this wine of celebrations stretches a long history, the passion of men and women for their vineyards and the wines they produce, and a region full of contrasts and charm. The vineyards of the Marne Valley differ from those of the Côte des Blancs, which differ from those of the Montagne de Reims, and yet, they all produce wines of subtlety and delicacy that seduce and enchant. This hike will take you through the vineyards and villages of the Champagne region where you will discover monuments and curiosities, as well as testimonies of a long and glorious past. This journey will help you to learn about and appreciate the different vintage wines of the Champagne region in all their wonderful diversity.



Itinerary

Day 1 - Arrival in EPERNAY, the capital of Champagne. Stroll through the city along the majestic "avenue de Champagne" where the world famous champagne houses are located. Visit of wine cellars.

Lodging and breakfast in a 3-star hotel in the centre of the city

Day 2 - LE MESNIL SUR OGER – EPERNAY (21 km). Transfer by taxi to Le Mesnil-sur-Oger. From here you will begin your return to Epernay following the Côte des Blancs, named as such for the hillside vineyards that produce white wine, and more specifically, Chardonnay. As you walk through the vine-covered slopes you will pass the small, charming villages of Oger, Avize, and Cramant, all of which are decorated by beautiful old churches, wash houses, and fountains. Cramant is situated on a chalk peak and gives beautiful views of the Côte des Blancs. You will continue across the southern hills of Epernay, passing the villages of Monthelon and Chavot-Courcourt, its 13th century feudal church erected on a mount outside the village. Along the hillside, overlooking the villages of Moussy and Piercy and its 18th century château, you will make your way back to Epernay - *Lodging and breakfast in the same hotel*

Day 3 - VENTEUIL – AY (21 km). Today you will discover a small part of the Marne valley whose two banks are covered by the vineyard. The day begins with a taxi transfer to Venteuil, peaceful village overlooking the Marne. Through the vineyards, you will head to Damery, pass over the village of Cumières along the river and join Hautvillers, cradle of Champagne. Here stood a Benedictine abbey where Dom Perignon perfected the method of vinification of Champagne wines during the 17th century. It rests in the choir of the church, only vestige of this abbey. You will continue your walk through the vineyard via the small village of Champillon before joining Ay, another great place of Champagne. You will visit this city, already known in the Gallo-Roman and once fortified and do not miss strolling in its narrow and winding streets to admire the old half-timbered houses, typical of champagne. Taxi transfer at Epernay at the end of the day. *Lodging and breakfast in the same hotel.*



Day 4 - AY – AMBONNAY (21 km). Taxi transfer at Ay in the morning. Ay is a historic site and one of the most famous vineyards of Champagne. You will begin your hike through the vineyards to arrive in the village of Mutigny. You will continue through the villages of Avenay-Val-d'Or, Fontaine-sur-Ay and Bouzy (famous for its red wines) before reaching Ambonnay and its 12th century church, Saint Réol. Taxi transfer from Ambonnay to Chalons en Champagne at the end of the day.

Lodging and breakfast in a 3 star hotel at Chalons en Champagne.

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Day 5 - VERZENAY (17 km). Transfer by taxi to Vernezay. You will take off again through the vineyards, the Verzenay windmill and lighthouse stand as your points of immediate destination. The lighthouse was built as recently as the 19th century by a wine-merchant in search of fame. Moving on, you will reach Verzy and continue through the forest to admire the famous “Faux” of Verzy, an entanglement of rare beech trees. These beech trees, with a slow rate of growth and long life-span, grow in twisted, knotted patterns, their branches spreading out like a canopy. Taxi transfer to Chalons at the end of the day- *Lodging and breakfast in the same hotel*

Day 6 - LUDES – JOUY LES REIMS (21 km). Escort by taxi to Ludes. Crossing through the vineyards, you will pass the pleasant villages of Chigny-les-Roses, and Rilly-la-Montagne. From Mont Joly, you will discover Reims. Making your way through its vineyard, you will pass by Chamery, Ecueil and its 12th century church overlooking the village, and Sacy and its 12th century church. The hike ends a top a hill near Ville-Dommange, at the Chapel Saint Lié, dedicated to a 5th century hermit. From here you will have a splendid view of the Reims region and plains that spread to the Massif de Saint Thierry. *A taxi will take you to Reims. Lodging and breakfast in a 2-star hotel in the center of Reims*

Day 7 - REIMS. An exploration of Reims, with gothic art and champagne. The city of Reims is best known for the Cathedral of Notre Dame, a masterpiece of gothic art. It includes the Palais de Tau, which holds the treasures of the cathedral, the basilica of Saint Rémi, and the museum that now resides in the ancient royal abbey. The city center has its own treasures to show you : a variety of monuments, such as La Porte Mars, evidence of ancient Reims. But one must not forget that Reims is a city of champagne, of great names who, grouped together in the neighborhood of Champ-de-Mars or on the chalk hillsides of Saint Nicaise, will be glad to welcome you for a visit of the cellars and a tasting - *Lodging and breakfast in the same hotel.*

Day 8 - REIMS. Tour ends after breakfast.

Season

From beginning of May to middle of October

What's included?

- 7 nights' accommodation in selected 2 or 3 star hotels
- 7 breakfasts – no dinners
- Hotel to hotel luggage transfer along the trail.
- Taxi transfers
- A set of maps (1/25 000 scale) with detailed route notes describing the trail.
- A daily itinerary together with information about facilities and places of interest along the trail.
- Emergency assistance.

Visa fees - transportation fees to and from the walk area - Insurance (strongly recommended on all trips) - Transfers except those mentioned above – Drinks – Entrance fees -Additional meals - Spending of personal nature e.g. laundry, souvenirs, phone calls,... are not included

Getting there and away

By train: Scheduled links between Paris Est rail station and the French main towns. To return, regular links between Reims and Paris

By car: Epernay is located at few kilometers from A4 and A26 motorways. To return, you have to take a train at Reims to go to Epernay (several links)

Where to park : guarded pay parking in the centre of Epernay. Return by train from Reims to get back your car

Walk difficulty

Grade 2 - walks of 4 to 6 hours a day. Some stages could be more 20 km (13/15 miles) and rolling uplands, ascents mainly gradual than steep of up to 500 m. An average level of fitness or some experience with walking is recommended.

